



Go for God!

The Book of ECCLESIASTES

Chapters 1 & 2

“Vanity of Vanities!”

Intro: Date Written: 935 B.C.

Author: King Solomon of Israel

Place: Jerusalem

The word *Ecclesiastes* means “speaker before an assembly.” Commonly known as the “preacher or a teacher.” The key word in *Ecclesiastes* is vanity, the futile emptiness of trying to be happy apart from God.

The Preacher (traditionally taken to be Solomon—1:1,12—the wisest, richest, most influential king in Israel’s history) looks at “*life under the sun*” and, from the human perspective, declares it all to be empty.

Power, popularity, prestige, pleasures—nothing can fill the void in man’s life but God Himself! But once seen from God’s perspective, life takes on meaning and purpose, causing Solomon to exclaim, “Eat . . . drink . . . rejoice . . . do good . . . live joyfully . . . fear God . . . keep His commandments!”

Skepticism and despair melt away when life is viewed as a daily gift from God. *Ecclesiastes* gives an analysis of negative themes, but it also develops the positive theme of overcoming the vanities of life by fearing a God who is good, just, and sovereign (12:13-14).

Wisdom involves seeing life from a divine perspective and trusting God in the face of apparent futility and lack of purpose.

Life is a daily gift from God, and it should be enjoyed as much as possible (see 2:24; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8-9).

The Jewish people read *Ecclesiastes* at the annual Feast of Tabernacles, a joyful autumn festival of harvest. Solomon wrote, “*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God*”

> The preacher develops clear truths about God and man:

- God’s existence (3:14; 5:2)
- God’s sovereignty and power (6:2; 7:13; 9:1)
- God’s justice (5:8; 8:12-13)
- Man’s sinfulness (7:20; 9:3)
- Man’s finiteness (8:8,17)
- Man’s duty (9:7-10; 12:13)
- Man’s immortality (3:11; 12:7)

- *Man's divine punishment and rewards (2:26; 3:17; 8:12; 11:9; 12:14)*

> Key Word is *Vanity*: This word appears thirty-seven times to express the many things that cannot be understood about life. King Solomon speaks of that which is *empty, without permanent value, that which leads to frustration*.

Another key term is "*under the sun*" (used twenty-nine times) seems to be filled with inequities, uncertainties, change in fortune, and violations of justice.

And another exhausting expression "*grasping for the wind*" is found nine times.

> Key Verses are:

- Ecclesiastes 2:24 - *Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.*

- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 - *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

> Key Chapter is Chapter 12 - The preacher climaxes the central point of the book in chapter 12 verse 13 by exhorting us to "*fear God and keep His commandments.*"

> Book Outline: Chapters 1—4 – The meaninglessness of earthly things.
Chapters 5—10 – Encouragement through experience.
Chapters 11—12 – The conclusion of the matter.

> Observe the following comparisons of *Life under the SUN* vs. *Life under the SON OF GOD*:

~ *Life under the SUN*:

- *What advantage is work under the sun (Ec. 1:3)*

~ *Life under the SON OF GOD*:

- *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6)*

~ *Life under the SUN*:

- *Nothing new under the sun (Ec. 1:9)*

~ *Life under the SON OF GOD*:

- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation . . . all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17)*

~ Life under the SUN:

- *All deeds are vanities under the sun (Ec.1:14)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *Be steadfast, immovable . . . knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*

(1 Cor. 15:58)

~ Life under the SUN:

- *The fruit of labor is hated under the sun (Ec. 2:18)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *Being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10)*

~ Life under the SUN:

- *Man is mortal under the sun (Ec. 6:12)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*
(John 3:16)

~ Life under the SUN:

- *Pleasure is temporary under the sun (Ec. 8:15)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*

(Phil. 2:13)

~ Life under the SUN:

- *Man cannot discover God's work under the sun (8:17)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Cor. 13:12)*

~ Life under the SUN:

- *All men die under the sun (Ec. 9:3)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 Jn 5:11)*

~ Life under the SUN:

- *Strength and speed under the sun (Ec. 9:11)*

~ Life under the SON OF GOD:

- *God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which*

are mighty (1 Cor. 1:27)

~ Life under the SUN:

- *Life under the sun will cease (Ec. 12:2)*

~ *Life under the SON OF GOD:*

- *That you may know that you have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13)¹*

> Chapter 1 - "The Words of the Preacher!"

(v1-2) All is VANITY! – Let us define VANITY - Emptiness, worthlessness, or futility. The word vanity as used in the Bible does not mean conceit or a "superiority complex," like the modern meaning of the term. When applied to persons, it means emptiness or futility of natural human life (Job 7:3; Eccl 1:2; 2:1; 4:4; 1:10).

When applied to things, vanity is especially used to describe idols, because there is no spiritual reality to them (Isa 41:29). Believers are urged to stay away from vain things and to live their lives in the reality of their relationship to Christ. Anything short of God Himself which a person trusts to meet his deepest needs is vanity! (Eph 4:17-24). (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

(v3-4) Man's labor is in vain – Jesus speaks of this in Luke 12:13-21 (Let us turn.)

(v5-7) The universe & nature continue—who's in control?

In Colossians 1:15-17 we read - *He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

- Does Jesus prove the aforementioned? Yes, in Mark 4:35-41 & Matthew 14:22-33

(v8) All things are full of labor for man - Genesis 3:17-19 -*Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."*

(v9-11) There is nothing new (in regard to human nature), things come, things go.

¹ *Talk Thru The Bible*, Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa, pg. 168-172

(v12-15) What should our hearts *seek and search* for? Matthew 6:19-34

(v16-18) Human wisdom cannot satisfy. (Key point “human wisdom”)

> **Chapter 2 - “The Heart is a Vacuum of Vanities!”**

(v1-3) Parties, pleasure, madness - vanity, vanity, vanity!

(v4-11) Prosperity, possessions, people - vanity, vanity, vanity!

(v12-16) Wealthy or poor, wise or foolish, the grim reaper comes for us
all!

(v17-23) Life without God is distressing, despairing, sorrowful,
burdensome, and the heart does not rest! Jesus said in Matthew
11:28-30 - *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will
give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle
and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is
easy and My burden is light.*”

(v24-26) “*God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good
in His sight*” – Luke 16:19-31